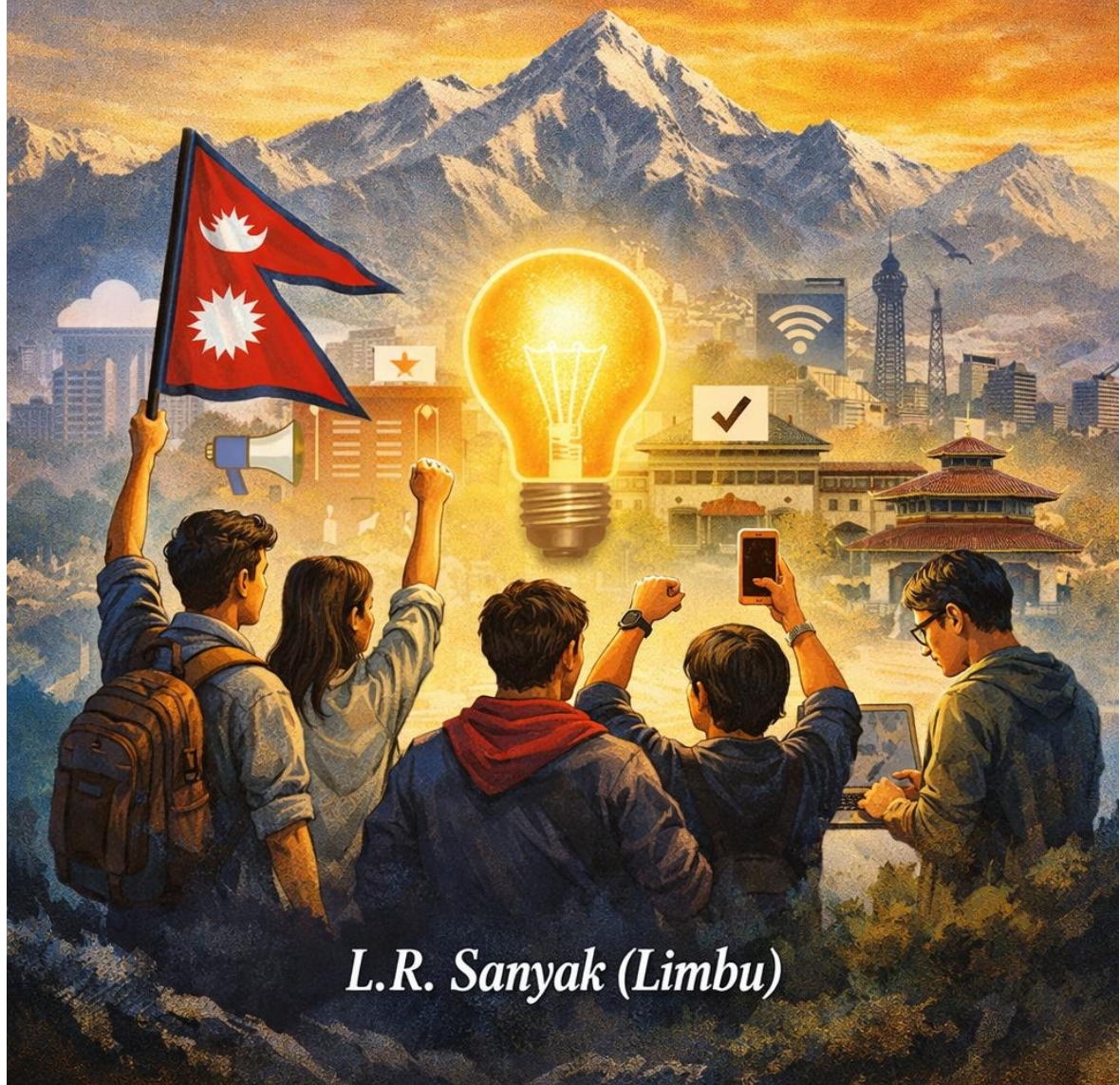


Emerging Potential

AMONG NEPALI YOUTH



L.R. Sanyak (Limbu)

Emerging Potential

Among Nepali Youth

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Introduction:

Nepali youth today represent an unprecedented social, political, and economic potential. Their awareness, activism, and creativity are not limited to personal development; they possess the capacity to play a decisive role in shaping the nation's future, strengthening democracy, promoting social justice, and fostering innovation. In recent years, youth have challenged established structures through street protests, social movements, digital campaigns, and alternative political initiatives. This engagement is not merely oppositional; it is guided by a deliberate and strategic vision for positive transformation. Politically, youth are actively participating in democratic processes, pressuring traditional leaders and party structures for reform. They are moving beyond the role of passive voters and increasingly influencing policy-making and political decision-making directly.

In the social and cultural domain, youth have played an innovative role by driving changes in social justice, gender equality, education, and health sectors. Startups, social enterprises, and innovative projects have positioned youth not only as business innovators but also as **agents of social innovation**. Digital tools have given them the means to amplify their voices and ideas effectively, creating opportunities to influence policy and societal perspectives at the national level.

Economically, youth are actively contributing to the country's development through employment generation, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Nepali youth working abroad play a significant role in national development through remittances, which positively impact rural economies, social structures, and development projects. Therefore, the potential of Nepali youth is not limited to problem-solving; their vision, talent, and creativity carry the promise of long-term and sustainable transformation in nation-building, democratic strengthening, and social justice.

In summary, Nepali youth are not merely responding to the current political and social challenges; through their active engagement and innovative mindset, they have the **capacity to chart a new course for the nation's future**. Their awareness, courage, and entrepreneurial spirit form the foundation of Nepal's long-term prosperity, stability, and democratic development.

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Emerging Potential Among Nepali Youth

1. Philosophical Foundation

The philosophical foundation of societal change provides insight into how individual consciousness, institutions, and social structures interact. Concepts such as **change, state, youth, power, responsibility, democracy, citizenship, freedom, and justice** are deeply interconnected. Without a clear understanding of these concepts, sustainable and long-term social transformation is impossible.

1.1 Change

Change is not merely an alteration of external conditions; it is a profound transformation of consciousness, values, beliefs, and social structures¹. According to Hegelian philosophy, history progresses through dialectical development². In the context of Nepal, when traditional structures fail to meet the aspirations of the youth, youth consciousness plays an active role. Student movements, political protests, and social campaigns illustrate this principle³. Youth dissatisfaction is not merely impulsive; it is a demand for **structural reform**.

1.2 State

The state represents collective power and organization. Philosophers from Hobbes to Rousseau have debated the origin, purpose, and limits of the state⁴. The state must exercise authority while ensuring individual freedom and justice. In Nepal, where governance has oscillated between monarchy, federal democracy, and transitional structures, the state must maintain dialogue and accountability with its citizens. Young citizens challenge traditional power structures by demanding transparency and participatory governance⁵.

1.3 Youth and Power

Youth and power are always interconnected. Power is not only coercion or force; it is the **capacity to effect change, shape institutions, and define social norms**⁶. According to Foucault, power circulates through relationships, knowledge, and discourse⁷. In Nepal, youth influence policy and governance through education, social media, and civic engagement. This dynamic carries an ethical responsibility as well—the exercise of power must ensure social welfare.

1.4 Democracy, Citizenship, Freedom, Justice

Democracy is more than elections; it is the continuous practice of **participatory governance, deliberation, and accountability**⁸. Citizenship involves both rights and duties—not only protection under the law but active engagement in social and political life. Freedom is not simply the absence of constraints; it is the ability to pursue meaningful goals. Justice serves as the standard for all these interactions, ensuring that power, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and ethically. In Nepal, implementing these ideals remains challenging, but the consciousness among youth is advancing toward realizing these values in practice⁹.

1.5 Transformation in the Nepalese Context

In Nepal, these philosophical concepts are not merely theoretical debates; they serve as **guiding principles for practical implementation**. Youth are raising their voices, demanding rights, and participating in social reforms. The challenge is to institutionalize youth consciousness and ensure responsible exercise of power¹⁰. Philosophically, this represents the bridge between ethical responsibility and practical governance.

1.6 Conclusion

The philosophical foundation linking change, state, youth, power, and responsibility positions youth not merely as historical participants but as **primary agents**. Nepalese youth aim not only to study history but also to shape its ideological direction. If their consciousness is suppressed, change may become uncontrollable; if actively included, change can be long-lasting and constructive. This philosophical foundation guides Nepalese society toward sustained democratic development and justice-oriented structures.

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2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Political Theory

Political theory provides a deep understanding of the state, power, governance structures, citizens' rights, and responsibilities. It forms a critical foundation for understanding decision-making processes, the nature of governance, and the role of youth in politics.

In the context of Nepal, political theory helps explain the significance of **federal democracy, multiparty systems, and social inclusion**¹. For instance, following the 2006 People's Movement, the establishment of a multiparty democracy and subsequent constitution-building process laid the foundation for citizen rights and accountable governance. This development encouraged active participation from the youth².

Political theory views youth not merely as voters but as **active agents of political transformation**, providing a framework to analyze how youth consciousness, activism, and policy influence can shape governance.

2.2 Development Theory

Development theory studies social, economic, and institutional change, focusing on concepts such as economic growth, social inclusion, human development, and sustainable progress³.

In Nepal, the application of development theory is evident in rural outreach, health, education, and digital infrastructure initiatives. For example, the 2015 Constitution emphasized **equal opportunities and inclusive development**, which has enabled youth participation in social progress and innovation⁴.

Development theory also views youth as **agents of social change**, who leverage technology, startups, and social campaigns to advance sustainable development and social justice goals.

2.3 Concepts of Youth Participation

Youth participation refers to the active role of young people in social and political processes. It encompasses activities such as **voting, policy-making, activism, volunteering, and innovation**⁵.

In Nepal, youth participation is particularly visible in social movements, student organizations, digital campaigns, and innovation projects. Notable examples

include the 2006 People's Movement and youth involvement in constitution-building between 2015–2017⁶.

Youth participation is essential not only procedurally but also for **ideological and policy transformation**. It strengthens the relationship between the state and society, enhances civic responsibility, and contributes to the sustainability of democratic institutions.

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3. Current Reality of Nepal (Data + Analysis)

3.1 Electoral Behavior

Electoral behavior in Nepal reflects citizens' political consciousness, voter turnout, and trust in political parties. Over the past decade, voter participation has ranged around **60–70 percent**¹. However, there is a notable difference between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, youth often remain uncertain about the electoral process, whereas rural voters tend to show more trust in traditional parties and local leaders².

Major factors influencing electoral behavior in Nepal include limited democratic practice, allegations of corruption, and political instability. However, social media and digital platforms have increased political awareness among youth, fostering greater engagement in electoral processes.

3.2 Youth Voters

Youth voters aged 18–35 make up approximately **45–50 percent** of Nepal's population³. This demographic represents a decisive force in the country's political future.

Young voters generally prioritize issues such as transparency, employment, education, and anti-corruption measures. However, political instability and

unfulfilled electoral promises have led to youth dissatisfaction and uncertainty. Consequently, youth voter engagement and political preferences remain dynamic and often fluctuate.

3.3 Unemployment, Migration, Education

Unemployment

Nepal's unemployment rate is approximately **11–12 percent**⁴, with higher rates among youth. Even educated youth often migrate abroad when local employment opportunities are limited. Unemployment significantly affects social stability and political awareness.

Migration

Due to international employment opportunities and internal migration, Nepal experiences a **high migration rate among youth**. According to the World Bank, roughly **3 million Nepali youth** leave the country annually in search of employment⁵. This has substantial impacts on rural economies, family structures, and social networks.

Education

Among the 15–24 age group, Nepal's literacy rate is close to ****95%****⁶. However, the quality of education and its alignment with employment opportunities remain challenges. Universities and vocational training programs still struggle to produce employable graduates.

3.4 Analysis/Key Insights

The current reality in Nepal demonstrates that **political awareness, youth engagement, and socio-economic conditions** are deeply interconnected.

- Electoral behavior and youth voters indicate potential for political stability and reform.
- Unemployment and migration generate dissatisfaction among the youth demographic.
- The mismatch between education and employment poses challenges to long-term economic development.

Therefore, youth-focused policies, employment generation, and educational reforms are essential to ensure social stability and democratic development in Nepal.

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4. Comparative Insight

4.1 Youth-Led Change in Other Countries

Across the world, youth have played a significant role in political, social, and economic transformations. Examples include:

- **Arab Spring (2010–2012):** In Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, youth challenged established governments through online campaigns, street protests, and mass mobilization¹.
- **Hong Kong Protests (2019–2020):** Student and youth groups staged prolonged demonstrations advocating for democracy and freedom².
- **Youth Social Movements in France:** French youth mobilized extensively to demand reforms in employment and education³.

These cases demonstrate that youth do not merely demand a better future for themselves but also **actively shape social structures and policies**.

4.2 Digital Politics

Digital media has made youth participation faster and more impactful. Youth worldwide have used social networks, blogs, vlogs, and mobile applications to:

- Run awareness campaigns
- Apply pressure on governments and demand transparency
- Promote political awareness and encourage voter turnout⁴

For example, in India, youth leveraged social media during the 2019 general elections to increase access to electoral information. Similarly, Nepali youth are increasingly using digital platforms to voice opinions and influence political decisions, aligning with global trends.

4.3 Protest and Mobilization

Youth raise their voices through protests. Patterns of youth movements globally include:

- Street demonstrations and marches
- Social media and digital campaigns

- Building international support networks
Such movements not only impact governments and policy decisions but also enhance political awareness and engagement among youth⁵.

4.4 Policy Influence

Active youth participation directly influences policymaking. Examples include:

- In Colombia, youth pressure led to reforms in education and local employment policies⁶.
- In South Africa, student movements successfully achieved amendments in university fees and strengthened student rights⁷.

In Nepal, youth are increasingly creating opportunities to influence democracy, employment, education, digital policy, and social justice.

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5. Electoral Environment and Youth Psychology

5.1 Despair vs Hope

In Nepal, the electoral environment evokes a mixture of despair and hope among youth.

Despair:

- Continuous political instability and lack of meaningful change have increased youth dissatisfaction.
- Corruption, irregularities, and unfulfilled electoral promises make youth disengaged from political processes¹.

- Such despair may lead youth to abstain from voting or turn toward non-traditional political options.

Hope:

- Conversely, democratic processes, social movements, and digital platforms inspire hope among youth.
- Youth believe that change is possible through their votes and participation².
- Hope motivates youth to become active citizens and explore new ideas and alternative political options.

5.2 Attraction Towards Alternative Politics

Youth dissatisfied with traditional parties and leaders often seek new alternatives.

- **New Parties and Political Movements:** Youth are attracted to parties focusing on youth leadership and innovation.
- **Social and Digital Movements:** Digital campaigns offer perspectives different from conventional politics³.
- **Ideological Change:** Alternative politics encourages youth to trust in new policies, anti-corruption measures, and transparency.

Nepal's electoral environment shows that **youth psychology** is not only based on personal experience but is deeply linked to social, economic, and political realities.

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6. Conclusion – The Historical Role of Youth in Transforming Nepal

Throughout Nepal's history, youth have played a decisive role in nation-building and social transformation. Their activism, awareness, and engagement have been pivotal at critical junctures.

6.1 Historical Role of Youth in Transforming Nepal

Democratic Movement (1950–51): Students and youth challenged the monarchy and paved the way for a multiparty democracy¹.

- **People's Movement (2006):** Youth influenced old party structures and constitution-building through street protests, digital campaigns, and social organizations².
 - **Contemporary Movements:** Youth participation in constitution drafting (2015–2017) and local elections has been significant. These examples demonstrate that youth in Nepal are not merely participants but **active architects of change**.
-

6.2 Social and Economic Contribution

- Youth have driven **social entrepreneurship, startups, and community initiatives**, fostering innovation in the economy³.
 - Digital technology and social media have empowered youth not only to voice opinions but also to influence policy⁴.
 - Nepali youth working abroad contribute to national development through **remittances**.
-

6.3 Political Awareness and Digital Participation

- Social media, online campaigns, and digital activism have made youth **active participants in politics and democracy**.
 - The search for alternative political parties and movements has pressured traditional structures to reform.
 - Youth exert influence not just through voting but by advocating for **social justice, transparency, and accountable governance**⁵.
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6.4 Concluding Analysis

The historical role of youth in transforming Nepal can be summarized as follows:

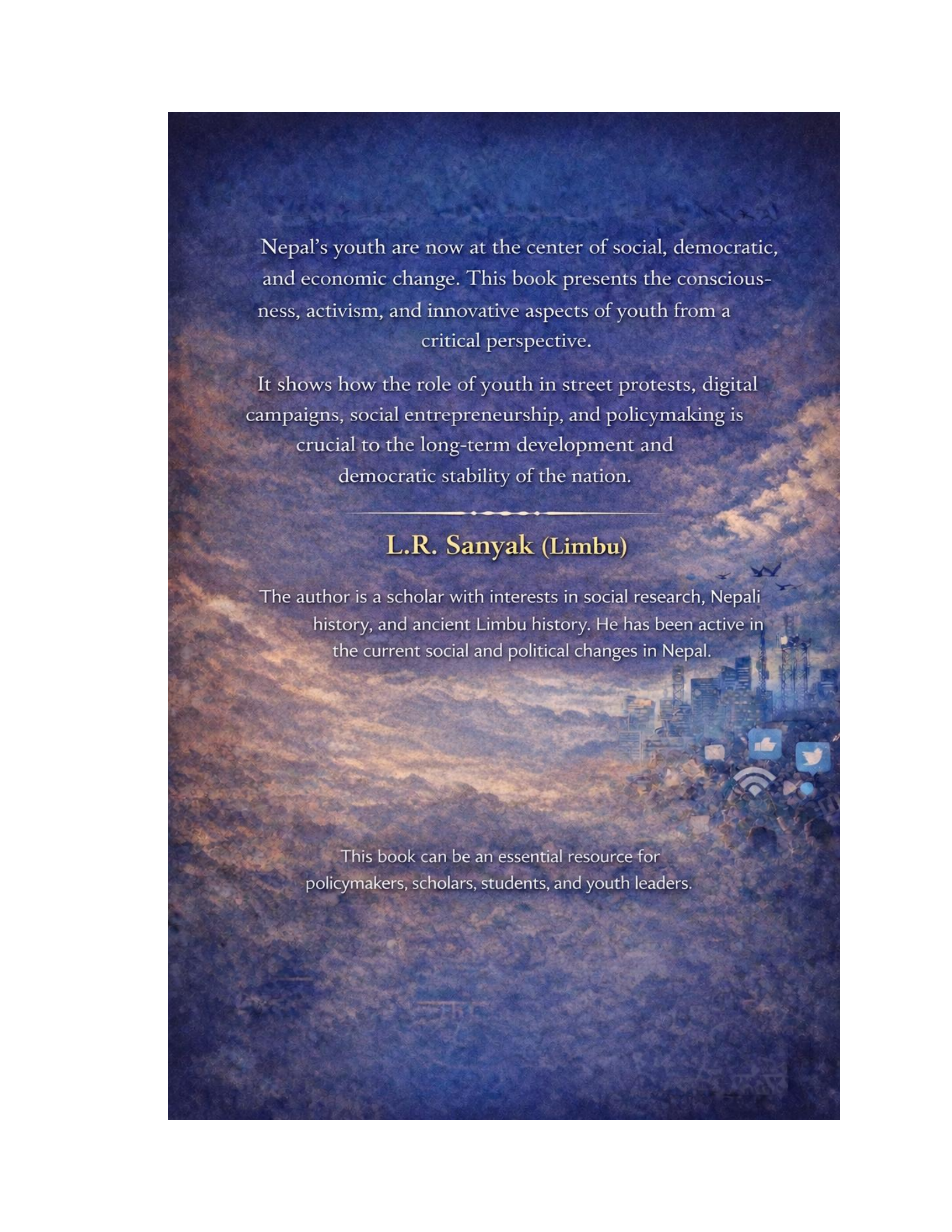
1. **Active Architects:** Youth initiatives are decisive for social and political change.
2. **Social and Economic Innovators:** Contributions through startups, social enterprises, and remittances.
3. **Political Awareness:** Active citizens ensuring democratic and accountable governance.
4. **Digital Advocates:** Leveraging social media and digital platforms to create awareness and exert pressure.

These examples confirm that Nepali youth possess the **capacity to guide the future direction of the nation**.

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Nepal's youth are now at the center of social, democratic, and economic change. This book presents the consciousness, activism, and innovative aspects of youth from a critical perspective.

It shows how the role of youth in street protests, digital campaigns, social entrepreneurship, and policymaking is crucial to the long-term development and democratic stability of the nation.

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The author is a scholar with interests in social research, Nepali history, and ancient Limbu history. He has been active in the current social and political changes in Nepal.

This book can be an essential resource for policymakers, scholars, students, and youth leaders.